

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, I have noticed we do have a great deal on the plate obviously because we are going to finish and go on August break next week.

We have heard that the DOD, the Agriculture, the foreign operations, the legislative branch and the immigration conferences might also come up. Could the gentleman address the possibility of those conference reports?

Mr. DELAY. If the gentlewoman will yield further, certainly the Committee on Appropriations of the House is working as hard as they can to see that that happens. We are trying to get as many appropriations bills to the President as quickly as possible in anticipation of adjourning on October 4.

Mrs. KENNELLY. So the above mentioned will be going to conference, or the gentleman is going to try to see if they will go to conference?

Mr. DELAY. If the gentlewoman will continue to yield, we certainly want to go to conference on those bills any way that we can next week so that we can stay on our schedule.

Mrs. KENNELLY. I thank the distinguished majority whip.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY, JULY 29, 1996

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 3900) to amend the Agricultural Market Transition Act to provide greater planting flexibility, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. COMBEST] for an explanation of the bill.

Mr. COMBEST. I appreciate the gentleman yielding.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3900 is a short and simple bill to address two problems related to the implementation of the 1996 farm bill, or the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act. This bill has been the subject of many staff discussions between Republicans and Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee and with staff of the Department of Agriculture. I have personally visited with my good friend, Secretary Dan Glickman, about the first part of this bill and he supports making this change.

The first part of the bill simply allows farmers to plant a secondary crop of fruits or vegetables on their farm program acreage following a crop which has failed earlier in the year. This practice, referred to as ghost acres, has been allowed for several years but is being disallowed this year due to the interpretation of the new farm bill by USDA. Allowing this practice clarifies the intent of Congress and does not violate the spirit of any agreements made on the issue of planting flexibility under the new farm bill.

It is unfortunate that the passage of this legislation has become necessary and many of us believe that this problem could have been more easily resolved by a more appropriate interpretation of this provision by USDA. Language very similar to this was recently inserted into the Agriculture appropriations bill on the Senator floor. However, enactment of this change is needed now to allow farmers to get their crops into the field immediately.

The second provision of H.R. 3900 requires the issuance of new regulations by the Department of Agriculture for the Conservation Reserve Program by September 15. This requirement is needed because rural Americans have already waited too long to hear what the details of the new CRP program will be and need to make decisions as to the future use of their land.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress and I urge its immediate adoption.

Mr. DE LA GARZA. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM].

(Mr. STENHOLM asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this unanimous-consent request.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 contains a provision under section 118 which prohibits the planting of most fruit and vegetable crops on contract acreage, with three narrow exceptions. The primary intent of this provision is to prevent the subsidization of fruit and vegetable production in competition with traditionally nonsubsidized producers of these crops, yet allow for the same flexibility to plant fruits, vegetables, or other commodities as

was allowed in the last farm bill, the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. Rather than leave the issue open for interpretation, this bill more clearly defines the parameters under which farmers can plant a second crop without incurring an acre-for-acre reduction in their market transition payment.

In Texas, blackeyed peas are historically grown on failed cotton acreage. They make for an excellent followup crop to cotton compared to other crops, because they more readily adapt to the herbicides used in cotton planting. More importantly, blackeyed peas allow producers an opportunity to grow a crop that: First, requires considerably less water during times of drought; second, serves as an excellent ground cover, even if they only get a few weeks growth; third, assists with fertilization for next year's crop by contributing nitrogen to the soil, and fourth, provides lenders additional incentive to work with difficult credit situations like many farmers are experiencing now. Most States have similar cropping substitutes. Maybe it goes without saying, but every true Texan knows that any good luck throughout the year can easily be traced back to those traditional servings of blackeyed peas on New Year's Day. If this year's farm bill is really about flexibility, it is important that producers who operate outside those counties currently designated as double cropping regions, but who have traditionally been able to plant a commodity in lieu of a failed program crop, continue to have that opportunity. I am confident that it was not the plan by the authors of this farm bill to prohibit or restrict planting options relative to the past, and I feel certain that their aim was, at a bare minimum, to maintain the producer's freedom to farm his land at 1990 levels.

With the passing of this bill, we also encourage the Secretary of Agriculture to provide specific guidance to those producers who are considering bringing their land back into production from the Conservation Reserve Program. I understand the excessive workload that the Department is facing in issuing all the rules and regulations associated with this farm bill's implementation and the staffs of all those agencies involved should be commended for the long hours and headaches they have endured this summer—but it is very important that the eligibility requirements be determined and announced as soon as is reasonably possible so that CRP contract holders can know what to expect.

I support this bill and urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. DE LA GARZA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3900.

This bill will give the U.S. Department of Agriculture much needed direction in the interpretation of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996—FAIR Act—which we passed earlier this year.

H.R. 3900 is very simple. First, it reaffirms the Department's ability to continue the practice of ghost acres. Under prior farm bills, producers who suffered a natural disaster could plant a second crop of their choosing without having any impact on their participation in commodity programs. This practice allowed producers the ability to try to recoup some of their losses when Mother Nature was in an unkind mood.

The second provision in H.R. 3900 will require the Department to issue regulations by